



# Harris County, Texas

1001 Preston St., Suite 934  
Houston, Texas 77002

## Staff Report

**File #:** 21-4970

**Agenda Date:** 9/14/2021

**Agenda #:** 365.

**Department:** County Judge

**Department Head/Elected Official:** Lina Hidalgo, Harris County Judge

**Regular or Supplemental RCA:**

☐ Regular RCA

☒ Supplemental RCA

**Type of Request:** Discussion Item

**Project ID (if applicable):**

**Vendor/Entity Legal Name (if applicable):**

**MWDBE Participation (if applicable):**

	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
Judge Lina Hidalgo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. Rodney Ellis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. Adrian Garcia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. Tom S. Ramsey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comm. R. Jack Cagle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Request Summary (Agenda Caption):**

Request by the County Judge for discussion and possible action to approve and adopt the updated Rules of Conduct and Decorum at Meetings of the Commissioners Court.

**Background and Discussion:**

These Rules of Procedure are to expressly promote the orderly conduct of the business of the County and to help those members of the public who have business before the Court or who wish to observe the meetings of the Court.

**Expected Impact:**

N/A

Presented to Commissioners Court

September 14, 2021

**Alternative Options:**

N/A

Approve: **G/R** To approve the rules as presented with an addition of the line that each speaker is allowed either 3 minutes total if there are under 25 speakers registered or 1 minute total if there are over 25 speakers registered irrespective of how many items the speaker registers for.

**Alignment with Goal(s):**

- ☐ Justice and Safety
- ☐ Economic Opportunity
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Public Health

- ☐ Transportation  
☐ Flooding  
☐ Environment

☒ Governance and Customer Service **Prior Court Action (if any):**

**Location:**

Address (if applicable list below):

- ☒ Countywide  
☐ Precinct 1  
☐ Precinct 2

☐ Precinct 3

<input type="checkbox"/> Precinct 4 <b>Fiscal and Personnel Summary</b>				
Service Name		FY 21-22	Estimates	
			FY 22	Next 3 FYs
<b>Incremental Expenditures</b>				
Labor Expenditures		-	-	-
Non-Labor Expenditures		-	-	-
<b>Total Incremental Expenditures</b>		-	-	-
<b>Funding Sources</b> (General Fund, PIC Fund, Debt or CP, Grants, or Other - Please Specify)				
Existing Budget		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
Total Current Budget		-	-	-
Additional Budget Requested		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
Total Additional Budget Requested		-	-	-
<b>Total Funding Sources</b>		-	-	-
<b>Personnel</b> (Fill out section only if requesting new PCNs)				
Current Position Count for Service		-	-	-
Additional Positions Requested		-	-	-
<b>Total Personnel</b>		-	-	-

**Anticipated Implementation Date:** September 14, 2021

**Emergency/Disaster Recovery Note:**

☒ Not an emergency, disaster recovery, or COVID-19 related item

☐ Emergency Item

☐ COVID-19 related Item

☐ Disaster Recovery related Item

**Contact(s) name, title, department:**

Wallis Nader, Policy Director, County Judge's Office

**Attachments (if applicable):** Rules of Conduct and Decorum

## Commissioners Court Harris County, Texas

### Rules of Conduct and Decorum at Meetings of the Commissioners Court of Harris County, Texas

#### I. Purpose:

These Rules of Procedure are adopted by the Harris County Commissioners Court expressly to promote the orderly conduct of the business of the County and to help those members of the public who have business before the Court or who wish to observe the meetings of the Court.

#### II. Meetings:

- A. The Commissioners Court of Harris County, Texas meets in the Commissioners Courtroom of the Harris County Administration Building, 1001 Preston, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Houston, Texas. Meetings may be held at another location as specified in the notice setting the meeting.
- B. All meetings are posted by the County Clerk, Commissioners Court Records Department, in the lobby of the Criminal Justice Center, 1201 Franklin. As a courtesy, notices are also posted on the first floor in the lobby of the Administration Building, 1001 Preston, and on the ninth floor bulletin board and in the lobby of the Juvenile Justice Center, 1200 Congress Street in accordance with Tex. Gov't Code Ann. § 551.043.
- C. The County Clerk, Commissioners Court Records Department, will also post Regular and Special meeting notices as required by law. According to the Texas Local Government Code § 81.005(b), the County Judge or three County Commissioners may call a Special meeting.
- D. A proposed schedule of regular meeting dates and a court agenda will be made available by the Agenda Director in the Office of County Administration and will be posted on the County's website: <https://agenda.harriscountytexas.gov/>. The results of previous meetings will be maintained and made available to the public by the County Clerk, Commissioners Court Records Department.
- E. All Regular, Special, Emergency, and Executive Session meetings of the Harris County Commissioners Court will be called and conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code, Chapter 551.

#### III. Open Meetings Attendance:

Regular, Special, and Emergency meetings of the Commissioners Court are open to the public and representatives of the media. Executive Sessions of the Commissioners Court are not open to the public or representatives of the media and only those individuals permitted by law may attend Executive Sessions of the Court.

IV. Agenda:

- A. Any County Elected Official or County Department may place an item affecting their department or area of responsibility for discussion or consideration on the agenda. The request must be submitted electronically to the Agenda Director, Office of County Administration, via [CommissionersCourt@hctx.net](mailto:CommissionersCourt@hctx.net). The request shall be in a form approved by the Agenda Coordinator. Requests for placement of items received after the deadline may be posted as supplemental items at the discretion of the Agenda Coordinator.
- B. The County Judge may group certain items on the Court's Agenda as "Consent Items," which may be approved by the Court on a single motion ("Consent Motion") and vote.
  - (1) Prior to the consideration of the Consent Items, the County Judge or Presiding Member of the Court will honor any requests from any Court Member to remove an item from the Consent Items and the item will be separately considered by the Court.
  - (2) Each agenda item may, after discussion, be designated as a Consent Item, if appropriate, and included in the Consent Motion during the meeting of Commissioners Court.
- C. The typical order of business for meetings of the Court session shall be:
  - (a) Call to Order
  - (b) Opening Prayer, which shall be inclusive of the various religions in Harris County
  - (c) United States Pledge of Allegiance
  - (d) Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas State Flag
  - (e) Resolutions
  - (f) Public Comments
  - (g) Consent Agenda
  - (h) Items for discussion
  - (i) Public hearings
  - (j) Executive Session
  - (k) Adjournment
- D. The County Judge or Presiding Member of the Court has discretion to modify the order of business and routine procedural matters in accordance with the

provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code, Chapter 551, unless overruled by a majority of Commissioners Court.

V. Public Participation:

A. Purpose of Meetings:

The business of Harris County is conducted by and between the members of the Harris County Commissioners Court and those members of the County staff, Elected Officials, Department Heads, consultants, experts, and/or members of the public requested to be present and to participate. The public is invited to attend all meetings of the Commissioners Court (except Executive Sessions). .

B. Appearance Request Form:

(1) A member of the public who wishes to address the Court must complete an "Appearance Request Form," indicating which issue being considered by the Court he or she wishes to speak on, by completing the form online at <https://appearancerequest.harriscountytexas.gov/>, or delivering the completed form to the Harris County Office of County Administration, 1001 Preston, Suite 500.

(2) To request an appearance on the day of the Commissioners Court meeting, members of the public must report to the lectern outside the Commissioners Courtroom at 1001 Preston, Suite 934, Houston, TX 77002, and complete an Appearance Request Form prior to the commencement of a meeting. All persons speaking must indicate what items they are addressing. Speakers are not permitted to comment on issues not listed on the Appearance Request Form or on issues for which they have not registered to speak. Persons who fail to complete an Appearance Request form prior to the commencement of a meeting will not be permitted to address the court.

C. Conduct of Meetings:

Members of the public who have properly submitted a completed Appearance Request Form may address the Court after being recognized by the Presiding Officer.

D. Order of Consideration of Public Comments:

The Court must consider public comments regarding a specific item on the agenda when recognized by the Presiding Officer or their designee, but prior to Commissioners Court voting on the specific item.

E. Time Limit:

Each member of the public who appears before the Court is limited to three minutes to make his or her remarks unless the speaker has appeared before the Court on the same issue in any of the past three meetings, in which case the comment period may be limited to one minute. A member of the public who requests to speak about a topic that does not address a specific Agenda item will have a comment period of one minute, which will take place after all other speakers. If the total number of speakers registered to speak at a meeting of Commissioners Court is greater than 25, the time for each speaker is reduced to 1 minute for all speakers.

A member of the public who addresses the Court through an interpreter must be given at least twice the amount of time as a member of the public who does not require the assistance of an interpreter. Only the time during which the member of the public (rather than the interpreter) is speaking should be counted toward the member of the public's speaking time limit.

The Clerk of the Court or another person designated by the County Judge shall keep the time for speakers and enforce rules related to the speakers.

F. Proper Conduct Required:

It is the intention of the Commissioners Court of Harris County to provide open access to all members of the public of Harris County to express themselves on issues addressed by County Government. However, members of the general public are reminded that the Harris County Commissioners Court is a Constitutional Court, created by the state with judicial, administrative, and legislative powers. As such, the Harris County Commissioners Court possesses full power and authority to issue Contempt of Court citations. Accordingly, persons in attendance at any meeting of the Court shall conduct themselves with proper respect and decorum in addressing the Court, in participating in public discussions before the Court, and in all actions in the presence of the Court or while in the Commissioners Courtroom. Profane, insulting or threatening language and racial, ethnic or gender slurs or epithets will not be tolerated. Those persons who do not conduct themselves in an orderly and appropriate manner may be ordered to leave the meeting, and recognition to speak may be refused at subsequent meetings of the Court. Refusal to abide by the Court's Order may result in a Contempt of Court Citation.

G. Media:

Subject to reasonable rules of the Commissioners Court, media members and any other individuals may audio or video record meetings of Commissioners Court.

Media (or other) personnel and/or equipment, including cameras, microphones or lights, may not be located behind the Commissioners Court Bench without the express approval of the Court. Reporters and media technicians are required to structure their movements, equipment set-up and take-down, and other activities in a manner so as not to disrupt the Commissioners Court's deliberations or the ability of the public to see, hear, and participate in the proceedings. Interviews shall not be conducted inside the Courtroom while the Court is in session and should be conducted in a manner to avoid disruption of the proceedings of the Court.

VI. Court Personnel

A. Presiding Officer:

The County Judge shall serve as Presiding Officer and is responsible for conducting all meetings. When the County Judge is not present, the Senior (longest-serving) member of the Court shall serve as the Presiding Officer.

B. Bailiff:

The Constable for Precinct 1 and/or his designated deputy shall serve as Bailiff at all meetings of the Commissioners Court. The Court may appoint such other persons as Bailiff as it may deem necessary.

C. Parliamentarian:

First Assistant Harris County Attorney, or designee, shall serve as parliamentarian for all Regular, Special, and Emergency meetings.

D. Clerk for the Court:

The Deputy County Clerk, or designee, shall serve as the Clerk of the Court for all Regular, Special, and Emergency meetings.

E. Agenda Director:

The County Administrator shall designate a County employee in the Office of County Administration to serve as the Agenda Director.

F. Agenda Coordinator:

The County Administrator shall designate a County employee in the Office of County Administration to serve as the Agenda Coordinator.